

# Creating A Culture of Trauma-Informed Child Advocacy 2023 WACAP Conference October 24, 2023

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# Trauma- Informed Care

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Culture, race, & trauma

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Trauma definitions & types

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Trauma and the brain

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Epigenetics and child trauma

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The key principles of trauma-informed care

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The three myths of child trauma

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How to communicate with the traumatized child

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Utilization of the principles of trauma-informed care to develop and maintain positive relationships with children, parents, and caregivers

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Trauma-exposed workplace

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Secondary traumatic stress

# Culture, Race, & Trauma



WHO AM I? (Cultural  
Intersectionality &  
Cultural Humility)



WHO ARE YOU?

Activity:  
Differences  
For this  
activity,  
please:



Think of 3 things about your identity that you think make you different from others in the room and write them down.



Share the differences with the person sitting next to you. What might be some of the similarities and differences between yourself and the families you serve?

# What is Trauma?

- ▶ Trauma occurs when an individual experiences an intense, recurring, and/or prolonged event or events that threatens or causes harm to their emotional and/or physical well-being.



# What is Trauma?

Acute trauma

Chronic trauma

# Types of Trauma

Complex trauma

Historical trauma

Racial trauma

Intergenerational/parent  
trauma

Childhood  
bereavement

Traumatic separation

# System-Induced Trauma & Retraumatization

Trauma and loss are endemic to foster care

The losses continue to accumulate with removal, placement changes, educational disruptions, cancelled visits, sibling separations, etc.

Children and youth face further threat of harm due to impermanency, fears of rejection, and uncertainty.

Some may experience subsequent maltreatment after entering the system.



# Variability in Responses to Stressors and Traumatic Events

The person's age and developmental stage

The person's perception of the danger faced

Whether the person was the victim or a witness

The person's relationship to the victim of perpetrator

The person's past experience with trauma

The adversities the person faced prior to and following the trauma

The presence or availability of adults who can offer help and protection

Variability  
in  
Responses  
to Stressors  
and  
Traumatic  
Events

The objective  
nature of the  
event

The person's  
subjective  
response to it



# Trauma and the Brain

# Epigenetics & Trauma

The genes a person inherits from their biological parents provide information that guides their development.

Experiences during development can rearrange the epigenetic marks that impact gene expression.

Positive experience like supportive adults can impact these, as can negative experiences such as abuse and neglect.

# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- ▶ Impact of Child Development (Neurological Effects (e.g., brain anomalies, stress hormone dysregulation))
- ▶ Psychological Effects (e.g., poor attachment, poor socialization, poor self-efficacy)
- ▶ Health Risk Behaviors (e.g., smoking, obesity, substance abuse, promiscuity)

# Long-Term Consequences

## Disease and Disability

- ▶ Major Depression, Suicide, PTSD
- ▶ Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- ▶ Heart Disease
- ▶ Cancer
- ▶ Chronic Lung Disease
- ▶ Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- ▶ Intergenerational Transmission of Abuse

## Social problems

- ▶ Homelessness
- ▶ Prostitution
- ▶ Criminal behavior
- ▶ Unemployment
- ▶ Parenting Problems
- ▶ Family Violence
- ▶ High Utilization of Health and Social Services

# Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Care



TRAUMA AWARENESS



EMPHASIS ON SAFETY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS



OPPORTUNITY FOR CHOICE, COLLABORATION AND CONNECTION



STRENGTHS-BASED AND SKILL BUILDING

# Four Myths of Child Trauma

Little kids don't remember, do they?



Moving the child away from the trauma and my work is done?



Little children should not go through therapy, it would only make "it" worse.



Really .... All my client needs is a good LOVING home, right?



# How to Communicate with the Traumatized Child

Developmental linguistic ability to communicate

Clarity, fact-based questioning and deference to the child's knowledge

Cultural awareness and norms

Use neutral subjects to provide a basis from which to move towards more relevant subjects

Focusing on empowering the child

Addressing your own biases

Considering the abused/neglected child's mental state

Allowing the child's answers to stand as fact

# Relationships with Children, Parents, and Caregivers

- ▶ Developing POSITIVE relationships.
- ▶ No exact formula for you to follow, but DON'T MAKE IT WORSE.
- ▶ Be TRANSPARENT in appropriate terms.
- ▶ [PREDICTABILITY is BIG ... preview court decisions, actions, why they are needed sometimes and not others. Avoid unexpected changes. Create routines.
- ▶ Give client a VOICE in the case.
- ▶ FOLLOW THROUGH on what you say you will do. Breaking promises even minor breaks in trust are not acceptable.
- ▶ ANTICIPATE issues – triggers.
- ▶ PATIENCE when there are bumps in the road.

# Family Resilience

Beliefs – Shared beliefs help family members find **meaning** in adversity, cultivate hope and a **positive outlook**. They can be tied to faith or **spirituality**, giving individuals a bigger purpose, They help members see the crisis as a transformative opportunity for growth and foster a “can-do” attitude.

Organization – Refers to family structure, mutual support, and **connectedness**. Resilient families possess both **flexibility** and stability – they are open to change, while remaining nurturing and dependable. Their connectedness enables them to establish security and collaboration within the family and their social **networks** in times of need.

Communication is open and **clear**, tolerant, and encouraging. **Emotions** and opinions are expressed freely, fostering a proactive and collaborative spirit of **problem-solving**. Family members can approach adversity with empathy and resourcefulness.

# Internal & External Protective Factors

## Internal Factors

- ▶ Positive beliefs, hope, and optimism
- ▶ Problem solving skills
- ▶ Ability to regulate own emotions and behaviors
- ▶ Self-motivation
- ▶ Good intellectual functioning
- ▶ Positive self-views
- ▶ Relationships building skills

## External Factors

- ▶ Caregiver's coping advice
- ▶ Social support from adults
- ▶ Socioeconomic status
- ▶ Nurturing school and Community environments
- ▶ Opportunities to develop competence
- ▶ Positive peer relationships
- ▶ Cultural and spiritual connections

# Trauma-Exposed Workplaces



“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”



-Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen



Remen, R. R. (2006). *Kitchen table wisdom:*

*5 that heal*  
(10<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed.), pp. 52. Riverhead Books

# Personal Experience of Secondary Trauma and Burnout!

Personal  
Experience  
of  
Secondary  
Trauma  
and  
Burnout!

Indirect Trauma  
Definitions

Consequences of  
Child Advocacy Work

Wellness and Self-Care

Self-Care  
Strategies/Tools

# Indirect Trauma Definitions

Secondary traumatic stress

Compassion fatigue

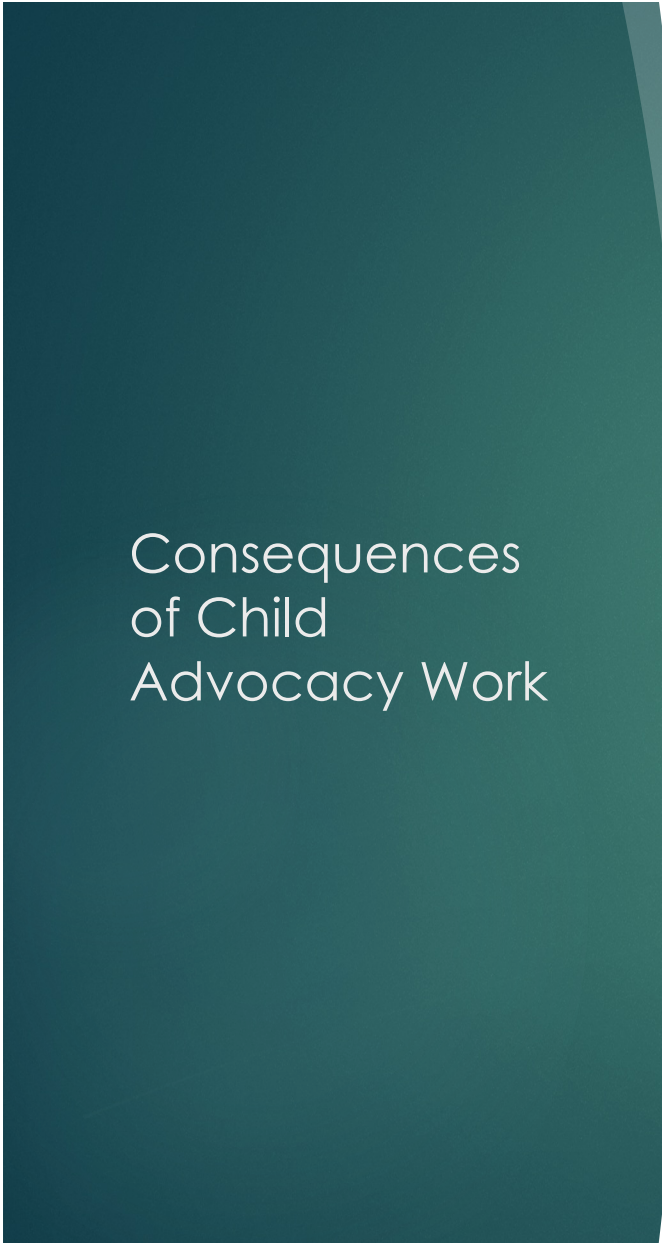
Vicarious trauma

Burnout

Moral distress

Compassion satisfaction





Consequences  
of Child  
Advocacy Work



Nature of the Work

Secondary Trauma Exposure,  
hazards of the work

2007, Bride & colleagues  
study

Protective Factors

# Wellness & Self-Care



WELLNESS & SELF-  
CARE DEFINED



KEEPING THE  
MIND AND BODY  
HEALTHY



PHYSICAL VS  
MENTAL HEALTH



WELLNESS  
TEMPERATURE  
CHECK

# Self-Care Strategies & Tools

Examples of self-care  
and self-regulation

Practicing self-care in  
the moment

Questions to assess  
emotional health

Formal self-help tools

# Strategies to Assess Emotional Health

## Quick Emotional Health Self-Help Questions

- ▶ Are you having emotional experiences in response to exposure to traumatized children and families?
- ▶ Do you feel overwhelmed due to the amt of work you have to do?
- ▶ What are your default coping strategies? Do they help or hinder your ability to be effective in your advocacy work?

# Self-Help Tools



PROQOL – Professional Quality of Life Scale



CAGE questionnaire



SAMHSA eight dimensions of health



Tumblr.com – Everything is Awful and I'm Not Okay: questions to ask before giving up.

# Secondary Traumatic Individual Assessment Tools

- ▶ *ProQOL 5*: This 30-item test measures the level of compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction as well as the level of burnout. It has been studied in multiple research studies and has been updated over time.

*ProQOL 5* is available at

<https://proqol.org/ProQolTest.html>

- ▶ *Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS)*: This 17-item test measures levels of secondary traumatic stress (TS). It has been studied in research studies.

- ▶ The *STSS* is available at

[https://www.naadac.org/assets/2416/sharon\\_foley\\_ac15\\_militarycultureho2.pdf](https://www.naadac.org/assets/2416/sharon_foley_ac15_militarycultureho2.pdf)

Addressing  
Self-Care in  
the  
Moment

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Q & A

Thank You!

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